

March 12, 2015

To Senator Moore, Representative Abercrombie and members of the Health and Human Services Committee:

Testimony for "An Act Concerning the Recoupment of State Costs Attributable to Low Wage Workers"

My name is Edie Reichard. I am the director of a State Funded Child Development Center in Hamden. I have been the director since 2004. My story is like many other directors of State Funded Centers. I am not paid a decent salary to do my job and I cannot pay my staff what they deserve to be paid due to lack of funds. We can only charge our working parents so much. If we charge more, it is not worth it for them to work just to pay for child care. They can make out better to live off the state by getting housing, food stamps, Husky, and whatever else for which they qualify. Therefore, we rely on the funding from the state to support the poor wages we offer our staff.

The staff we hire are very hard working dedicated individuals who have higher education degrees in Early Childhood Education or higher education degrees in related fields of study with credits in early childhood. Some of them are working full time while they pursue their degrees (mandated by state legislation). They have an honest love for their profession. They are not babysitters as some think. They are "*teachers*". As such we should be able to offer them a comparable wage to public school teachers. We are told that the early years are the most important years in a child's development and yet we pay those who choose this profession at a subpar level of compensation.

I have teachers in my employ whose children qualify for my program, receive food stamp, are on Husky insurance, and receive a housing allowance. If we could give them better compensation for one of the toughest jobs around they could live better lives and not have to rely on the state just to survive. Higher wages will help the State recoup some of the costs our low wage employees have to use to live in Connecticut and work in Early Care and Education.

I have been told by several other directors that if it were not for the dedication of our staff to this field, they would be better off working at McDonalds. They have better pay and do not require higher education degrees. What does this say about the respect our state has for those who teach our most precious commodity – our young children. We need to step up to the plate and compensate our early childhood directors, teachers, teaching assistants and teaching aides. We need to pay them a worthy wage!

Please support SB 1044. Thank you for taking the time to read this testimony.

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